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ABSTRACT

This paper points out the affinity of two basic elements of human existence--religion and sport--and then attempts to explain why they should be separate. It addresses the nature of religion, religion in America, the nature of sport, sport as religion, and reasons for the incompatibility of sport and religion. Similarities between sport and religion are listed, and the writings of several authors whose athletic experiences have had religious overtones are cited. Reasons for the incompatibility of sport and religion are then presented, including: (1) the essence of religion is selflessness and the essence of sport is selfishness; (2) treating God as some kind of supercoach demeans both religion and sport; (3) many athletes are practicing magic rather than religion; (4) athletes on praying teams are pressured to conform to team behavior, thus violating their religious freedom; and (5) some religious organizations for athletes represent the religious right, which often fosters authoritarianism and intolerance. (Contains 48 references.) (JDD)

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Sport and Religion: An Unholy Alliance

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The intimacy of sport and religion was brought into the national consciousness in 1976 when Frank Deford published a three-part series in Sports Illustrated on the topic (Deford, 1976). As anthropologists tell us, though, this relationship did not begin in the United States in the 1970s. As a matter of fact, religion and sport have always been intertwined. Earliest cultures incorporated sport (running, jumping, throwing, wrestling and even ball playing) in their religious ceremeonies, and as we all know, the Olympic games, the ancestors of modern sports, were sacred games which had their roots in religion (Guttman, 1992). And of course in America, the Muscular Christianity movement of the 1850s (Coakley, 1986) was a forerunner of what Deford and others refer to as "Jocks for Jesus."

In spite of the affinity of these two basic elements of human existence, this paper will attempt to explain why they should be separate. In order to do this, the following topics will be discussed: The nature of religion; religion in America; the nature of sport; sport as religion; and reasons for the incompatibility of sport and religion.

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The Nature of Religion

There is no definition of religion which is generally accepted. Most people know what is meant, but have difficulty defining it. Some definitons emphasize feelings and emotions, others belief, others historical components, while others emphasize cult and ritual.

Following is a definition by Bloom (1992) which emphasizes belief.

> Religion is more than knowing. It is belief in transcendence, divinity and acting on belief. Religion involves ritual and worship. The essential quality of religion is belief and acting out of that belief. (pp. 7-8)

The six major world religions are Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. These world relgions share the belief that human beings who, though in covenant with God, are covenant breakers or "fallen" creatures. Thus the world religions recognize that there is a gap between how life is often lived and the ideal life, and this fundamental estrangement between humankind and God is the essential problem that blocks the deepest hopes and expectations of humanity. On the positive side, there is the expectation, in each of these religions, that humanities essential problems can and will be overcome (Hall et al., 1986).

Other commonalities of the world religions are that they provide paths, signposts, and mechanisms by which people know where they have been, where and who they are, and where they are going. As part of this process religions provide human beings an access to transcendent reality. An access and reality that help infuse life with transformative power and meaning. Religious symbol systems

not only provide windows into the realm of the spirit but allow the light of that realm to enlighten the mundane life and transform it (Hall et al.,1986).

Another striking similarity in the world religions is that the Golden Rule, although expressed in different ways, is a basic tenent of all these faiths (Osterhoudt, 1973). These religions espouse the belief that people should treat others as they would like to be treated.

In addition to providing a source of superhuman help, portraying the nature of evil, and means of salvation, all religions are influential in determining moral conduct. Religion and morals are so closely intertwined that they are often indistinguisable. Determining what is right is seen by some people as the most important contribution of religion (Houf, 1945).

Although there are common patterns and expressions among the world religions, each religion tells its own sacred story. They are distinguished from each other by the whole cultural, social, and historical context within which they are lived. For example, one basis of moral action for Christians and Jews is the Ten Commandments. Other religions have similar moral codes, but such codes may be quite different from those of Western religions (Hall et al., 1986).

Thus we have a paradox. Religions are similar yet different.

Religion may also work for the opposites of good and evil. It has obviously undergirded society in remarkable ways, but there is a darker side evidenced thoughout history in terms of wars, of religious intolerance and bigoty, of greed and dishonesty on the part of religious leaders, and of rancor and acrimony among denominations and perhaps to a greater extent within denominations (Bezilla, 1990). I heard a preacher say recently that what the world needs is not more religion, but more love.

In America, for example, religion, while striving to be a regenerative force in society, is often one of the more divisive agencies concerned far more with sectarian morality (Episcoplians drink, Baptists not) than the basic problems of personal and social morality (Herberg, 1967). To pursue this topic further, a discussion of religion in America follows.

Religion in America

Although Protestanism was America's established church and continues to be dominant, being born in America does not, as it did until recent times, mean being Protestant (Herberg, 1967). A recent Gallup survey showed the great diversity of religion in America. Gallup reported nearly 500,000 churches, temples and mosques representing 2,000 denominations. This does not include countless independent churches, faith communities and para-churches (Bezilla, 1990).

Another interesting aspect of religion in America is that Catholics and Jews who once experienced their non-Protestant religion as a problem and one obstacle in becoming full-fledged Americans now find this no longer the case. The Prostestant, Catholic, and Jewish faiths have been described as the three religions of democracy (Herberg, 1967).

This transformation of American society from a Protestant to a three religion country has resulted in a new spirit of freedom and tolerance of religions, but Herberg (1967), while acknowledging these gains, believes that by integrating the Protestant, Catholic and Jewish religions into a "common religion", religion has become secularized. That is, religion serves nonreligious functions--a religiousness of belonging without religious commitment, concern, or passion. Other writers share this concern about non-religious religion, particularly when writing about New Age religion as being the replacement for secular humanism (Burrous, 1986).

Other theologians have concerns about the state of religion in the United States. Nida (1968) maintains that a growth in American Protestantism has been accompanied by alarming decreases in public and private morality, and Bloom (1992) predicts that by the year 2,000 Mormons and Baptists will overtake much of the country, implying that religious diversity will be a thing of the past in America. Dawe (1988), however, does not share this view. Writing in Theology Today he maintains that, although Protestantism still

dominates, it is clear that at the end of the 20th century religious pluralism is not about to disappear. Dawe further believes that religions are back with a new vigor, asking penetrating questions of the church and theologians who must answer such questions.

An article in a 1992 issue of the Social Science Journal is also of interest in terms of religious predictions. The authors of the article, Ted Jelen and Clyde Wilcox (1992) maintain that the new Christian Right is beginning to decline because, among other reasons, the religious right has become fragmented, and that the Moral Majority, which Jerry Falwell disbanded in 1989, never drew support from theologically conservative Christians.

Regardless of predictions, the Gallup survey of 1990 illustrates the dominance of Protestantism, and also confirms that America's interest in religion has been durable. The percent of the populace who are members of churches today closely match those of the 1930s. In the face of the dramatic societal changes in the past 50 years such as depression, war, social unrest, and technological change, the faith of Americans has remained constant. The 1988 Gallup data reveal that 94% of Americans express belief in God (Bezilla, 1990). Some people, though, are skeptical of that 94% figure. Nida (1968) maintains that only 20% of populace actually believe in God.

In spite of this durability of faith, Gallup's data reveal another

area of American illiteracy. Biblical ignorance. Although we revere the Holy Word we don't read it. Three-fourths of people surveyed did not know who delivered the sermon on the mount (Bezilla, 1990). I read recently that when the Sears catalog was in its heyday, a child when asked where the Ten Commandments came from, responded, "Sears Roebuck."

Humorous though this may be, religious ignorance causes a lack of awareness of a person's own religious traditions and of the central doctrines of one's own faith. One example is Baptists who advocate school prayer. One of the basic tenets of Baptist faith is strict separation of church and state. No Baptist, who understood Baptist doctrine, would favor prayer in schools. On the contrary, they would be actively opposing the practice.

The result of this lack of knowledge of religious doctrine is that large numers of Americans are uprooted in their faith and are therefore easy prey for movements that glorify self and not God. We pick and choose those beliefs and practices that are most comfortable and least demanding. This has been described as, "religion a la carte."

This then is a brief look at religion in America in the last decade of the 20th century. The best news from my research on this topic was found in the Gallup survey which reported that one of the most dramatic trends in the 55-year history of the Gallup Poll has been

the growth in tolerance toward persons of different religions (Bezilla, 1990). That is indeed a gratifying finding.

To close this section of the paper,a quote from the Gallup survey seems appropriate:

> Religious liberty has contributed vitality and vigor to the American outlook--an exuberance--a feeling that anything is possible and often, the courage to bring about difficult but needed change in society. . . . A continuing challenge in the decades ahead will be to be steadfast in one's own beliefs, to be faithful--to proclaim what one sincerely believes to be objective truth--but at the same time to be open, civil, and loving toward those who do not share our own religious perspective. (pp. 5- 6)

Now let us turn to our third topic in this discussion.

The Nature of Sport

. . . Many meanings and interpretations may be placed upon the term "sport." In fact, the types of human endeavors which are classified under this heading are so numerous and diverse that they seem to defy any effort to categorize them, although many thoughtful attempts have been made (Park, 1973).

Just as with religion, there are many definitions emphasizing a variety of aspects, but none is considered to be the last word.

Following are three sport definitions which illustrate this point:

> Sport is an institutionalized competitive activity that involves vigorous physical exertion or the use of relatively complex physical skills by individuals whose participation is motivated by a combination of intrinsic factors. (Coakley, 1986, p. 17)

Eitzen and Sage (1993 define Sport as . . . "any competitive physical activity that is guided by established rules." (p. 20).

And finally, a reviewer for The New York Times Book Review (Gilman, 1973), who was attempting to review sport books for possible Christmas selections, expressed his frustration in defining sport by asking, "Is rodeo a sport then? Yachting? Auto racing?" (p. 6). The reviewer then answered those questions by stating:

> My own mania for sports discriminates against any competition in which the human body is supplemented by an animal or large machine. Those things are physical activities. (p. 6)

For what it's worth, I agree with the reviewer.

Not only does sport have many and diverse definitions, the values attributed to sport are equally many and diverse. Among those many and diverse claims reported in the literature regarding values in sport are: character development; improving one's sex life through physical fitness; socialization; moral training; reduction of juvenile delinquency; and the experience of transcendence. (Fraleigh, 1990).

This experience of transcendence will be discussed later, but let me continue this look at sport values by mentioning that some professionals in our field maintain that the positive or for that matter negative values of sport are not pertinent to the sport experience. Larry Locke (1973) expressed this point of view in an article entitled "Are Sports Education". According to Lock, sport is a human experience. Questions about educational outcomes or any

other outcomes are irrelevant. We might just as well ask is any human experience educational--sex, dying, love. We don't insist that sex be educational, uplifiting, edifying, but we expect that of sport. Locke admonishes us to quit asking nonsensical questions. He goes on to say:

> Sport is beautiful! We never have been able to stand pat on that hand. As professionals, we always have feared the dreaded accusation of hedonism. To love and teach sport because it is human and beautiful, full of it own meanings and its own absurdity, has been denied to us. We have had to struggle up-hill, like Sisyphus, to make sport something that it cannot be. Thus, sport seems sometimes to fail us, not because of what it is, but because of what we have asked it to become. (p.90)

Locke (1973) concludes his essay by observing:

> Sport is not education. Sport is just what it is. If we could rejoice and celebrate that wonderful fact . . . on every athletic team, who knows what . . . joy, good sense and truth might spring from . . . the tree of sport. (p. 90)

Sport, then, like religion, defies definition, and also like religion is many things to many people. Unlike religion, however, sport, as considered in this paper, is concerned with competition, with beating someone. Religion, on the other hand, if I understand its basic tenets, is concerned with loving everybody and with humbleness. Thus, from my perspective, the incompatiblity.

This incompatiblity is explained best by Jack Higgs (1992). Listen to Higgs:

> Sports belong to the realm of the beautiful and play to the world of nature, but neither to the holy. In their purest form, sports are expressions of art and beauty, and play an immersion in nature for pleasure and rest of the mind and soul. Religion, by contrast, partakes of the spiritual

> sublime. It is a quest not so much of the beautiful as of the good and true by means of faith, hope and charity (at least in Christendom) and exercise of the intellect and spirit as opposed to competition for worldly prizes or indulgences in dance or play. . . (p. 91)

Having said all this to convince you that sport and religion should not be intertwined let us turn to the next topic, sport as religion. This demonstrates how confusing and contradictory the study of sport and religion is.

Sport as Religion

Michael Novak, the noted Catholic theologian, philosopher, in his book, The Joy of Sports, published in 1976 has made perhaps the most convincing argument that sport is a religion. Novak (1976) maintains that:

> Sports flow outward into action from a deep natural impulse that is radically religious: an impulse of freedom, respect for ritual limits, a zest for symbolic meaning, and a longing for perfection. The athlete may of course be pagan, but sports, are as it were, natural religions. There are many ways to express this radical impulse : by the asceticism and dedication of preparation; by a sense of respect for the mysteries of one's own body and soul, and for powers not in one's own control; by a sense of awe for the place and time of competition; by a sense of fate; by a felt sense of comradeship and destiny; by a sense of participation in the rhythms and tides of nature itself. (p. 19)

George Sheehan (1978), whom someone described as the guru of joggers, has also described sport, or in Sheehan's experience, running as religion. He writes:

> Running that day became for me, as I'm sure it has for others, a mystical experience. As proof of the existence of God. Something happened and then . . . one simply knows and believes and can never forget. (p. 230)

Patsy Neal (1974), the well-know basketball player of the pre-Title IX days, also experienced religion through sport. Her 1974 book of poetry, So Run Your Race, has as subtitle "An Athlete's View of God."

Joggers and basketball players aren't the only athletes who experience their sport as a form of religion. Hoffman (1991) informs us that there are increasingly numbers of, what he terms, athletes of God (athletae Dei) who are depicting their performances as religious experiences.

Hoffman goes on to explain that these athletes view their performances as opportunites for worship in which an omniscient and understanding God recognizes the spirit in which athletes train and perform and appreciates it in some not altogether explainable way, as reflecting glory in God's divinity.

If one is to believe the ubiquitous overt religious displays of religion in sport then there have obviously been many athletes, from a variety of sports, whose athletic experiences have had religious overtones. Charles Hopson (1992) in a recent doctoral dissertation examined one dimension of these religious overtones in an interesting study. He compared the relationship of the flow experience in sport with the possession of the holy spirit as described by some Christians. The six professional Christian athletes who were interviewed for the study reported that there were similarities between the two factors, and one of the

conclusions of the study was that a third factor could trigger flow. That factor was labeled by Hopson as quasi-religious, and was in addition to the situational and psychological factors as suggested in the model by Csikszentmihalyi (1990).

Many accounts such as these may be found in sport psychology books under headings of peak experience and flow, which in my view, are where they belong rather than in the realm of religion. It seems to me athletes are describing some kind of psychic reward which sport often provides, but that is another paper. Let it suffice to say that sport as a religion is receiving increasing attention in terms of what athletes say they are experiencing, and in terms of the number of people writing and speaking on this topic. Stay tuned.

Another interesting approach to the religion/sport relationship has been to look at sport not as religious experience but rather how sport, for many people, has supplanted religion. Several writers have made this point by showing the similarities betweeen sport and religion (Eitzen and Sage, 1993; Rudin, 1972; Prebish (1989). The following transparency illustrates this approach.

Similarities Between Sport and Religion

	Religion	Sport
Diety (s)	x	Superstars worshipped
Saints	x	Dead Superstars
High Priests	x	Coaches at all levels
House of Worship	x	Stadia, Arenas
Congregation	x	Fans
Chants	x	Go Vols
Hymns	x	Rocky Top
Rituals	x	All kinds
Shrines	x	Sports Hall of Fame Retire Jerseys
Scribes	x	Sportswriters Commentators
Commandments	10 in Christianity	Thou Shalt Not Lose Thou Shalt Win at all Costs
Moral Sayings	Golden Rule	Losing is four letter word
Symbols of Fidelty	Witnessing Commitment to Church	Fanatic Fans

Coakley (1986) has taken a slightly different approach in explaining the differences. Following are Coakley's views:

Similarities Between Sport and Religion

1. Both are grounded in a quest for perfection.
2. Both are built on asceticism (i. e., discipline and self-denial).
3. Both involve the integration of body, mind, and spirit.
4. Both involve strong feelings based on intensive concentration.
5. Both contain established rituals on all levels of participation.
6. Both contain institutionalized symbols related to people, places, procedures, and printed materials.
7. Both are administered through bureaucratized organizational structures.

As the transparancies indicate, religion and sport do share many commonalities, and for perhaps many people, sport has in fact taken the place of religion. Prebish (1989), for example, maintains that: "It is reasonable to consider sport the newest and fastest growing religion, far outdistancing whatever is in second place." (p. 293), but lest you forget, the purpose of this paper was to show why sport and religion should sever relationships rather than convince you that sport does indeed supplement or even supplant

religion. So let me get on with it.

The Incompatibility of Sport and Religion

Just as with statistics, the Bible is often quoted to support any point of view. The Biblical quote often used to support the affinity of sport and religion is from Il Timothy 4:7: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

This and numerous other New Testament allusions to sport which evangelicals often refer to, however, has not brought divine blessings on sport. That observation was made in a 1972 editorial in Christianity Today. The editorial went on to explain that the apostle Paul most likely used references to sport in order to communicate with the Greeks since sport was not a part of Hebrew tradition, and that the Romans, who were introduced to sport by the Greek lower classes, used sport, not in a religious sense, but as a means to pacify and keep the people in line.

Since the Bible, according to my interpretation, does not make sport divine, is that the only reason for the incompatibility of sport and religion. My answer to that is no, but that is a very good reason. But I have several others. Let's explore those.

Robert Roberts (1986), writing in Christianity Today asked the following question, "Is it inconsistent with Christian principles

to want to win when somebody has to lose?" Roberts concluded that if it is survival competition, which he described as "tooth and claw" then losing is degrading in some essential way and it becomes a struggle of self-esteem. In other words, if I win you are nothing and if you win I am nothing.

On the other hand , Roberts maintains that there is a type of competition which he labels "playful spirit" in which losing and winning are inconsequential and thus there is no threat to anyone's self-esteem. My question to Roberts is, is this later type really sport? I think not. So my answer to his question, "Is it inconsistent with Christian principles to want to win when somebody has to lose?" would be, "Yes", it is inconsistent. It is not Christian.

I agree with Hoffman (1986) that the essence of competition is self-promotion. This is the antithesis of religions which stress simplicity and humbleness. I also agree with Higgs (1986). Higgs observes that writers who have shown a connection between play and religion, play and art, and the serious and non-serious have contributed to our knowledge, but in doing this, Higgs believes as do I, that they have devalued theology, and have made religion seem as accessible and anti-intellectual as Muscular Christianity ever did. Higgs says loud and clear, "Sports belong to the realm of the beautiful and play to nature, but neither to the holy." (p. 91).

Another reason sport and religion don't mix in my view is that religion, according to some theologians, (Jelen & Wilcox, 1992) makes ultimate demands which may be absolute and non-negotiable. Sports, on the other hand, are never black and white. Although some would argue that winning and losing are non-negotiable, I would argue that one of the most important values in sport is how you win and lose. This is never clear-cut. We are not able, for example, to define sportsmanship much less agree on when the rules are broken for strategic reasons or when it is actually cheating.

Two recent articles in a publication entitled Church Recreation illustrate the problems that churches are having in trying to combine sport and religion. Both articles (Pursiful, 1991; McVay, 1991) bemoan the poor sportsmanship that is occuring in the softball, basketball, and volleyball games which are sponsored by churches and often played in the church gym. One author (McVay, 1991) states that grown men are often reduced to street fighters and the other author (Pursiful, 1991) writes that, "competitive sports bring out the raw edge of emotion more than any single thing." (p. 28). However, both authors are arguing against dropping team sports (which is apparently what many churches are doing) because of the situation. They both maintain that winning games is a very important way to witness for Christ. Their solution is to educate people, and to win big! I say, "Good Luck."

One of the more rewarding things about writing a paper such as this

(other than getting another line on my vita) is to discover a study which applies directly to your subject. Christopher Stevenson's study does just that. Stevenson (1991) generated his research in order to explain how elite athletes could accommodate the roles of Christian and athlete, when as Stevenson explains, most scholars do not believe it possible. In his study of 31 male and eight female current college and pro athletes associated with Athletes in Action in Western Canada, Stephenson found great variety in what athletes saw as acceptable behavior in their sport, but none saw a values conflict between athlete and Christian.

Stevenson reported the variability in behavior ranged from those who would praise God and then tell how they decapitated the quarterback to those who take their belief seriously and try to live and play accordingly. These latter types have the most difficulty accommodating sport and Christianity. Stevenson reported that the variety in types of adjustment represent developmental stages from immaturity to maturity through which athletes pass in terms of religious beliefs. Athletes in this study were at different stages, and of course, just like other folks, they may not ever grow to the mature stage, which Stephenson described as those athletes who believed their Christian faith was more important than sport. He found few athletes in this category. This being the case, I interpret the Stephenson study as being supportive of my thesis: Sport and Religion are an unholy alliance.

One of the main reasons I believe sport and religion are incompatible has to do with this aspect of maturity. I do not believe that many of us are mature in our religion. For the most part I believe society in general and sports in particular are in the baby or ego-centric stage. If this were not the case, I believe the world and sport would be far better places. Actually, it is my belief that we practice magic rather than religion, in sport as well as in society. Look at the transparency and make your own judgements: Similarities in religion and magic.

1. Both assume a supernatural power exists.
2. Both flourish in situations of uncertainty, danger, unpredictablity, and human helplessness.
3. Both are used to relieve stress.
4. Both are used extensively in sport

   Religion---Prayer

   Magic--Ritual (standardized practices), Taboo (no, no), Fetishism (revered object--gold chains), Witchcraft (bringing misfortune on others--freezing line-up)

Since prayer is the most commmonly manifestation of religion in sport, let us look at prayer a little more closely. According to some scholars (Houf, 1945), the earliest form of prayer was magical-- medicine men compelling the spirit to do their bidding. This type of prayer has evolved into the seeking of higher values through prayer--moral and spiritual help and from there into the highest prayer form, referred to as communion praying. In communion

praying the purpose is to realize the presence and fellowship of God. In my view, the prayer of athletes is more nearly on the magical end of the prayer continuum than on the most spiritual end.

Which brings me to the next reason to my opposition to sport and religion. That reason is the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. Although the First Amendment stipulates separation of church and state, there have been many interpretations to the Amendment, mostly having to do with whether the intent of the Founding Fathers was total separation or a cooperative arrangement. At any rate, there have been many First Amendment religious lawsuits and many of those have involved prayer at athletic events. For a good discussion of this topic let me suggest an article by Elizabeth Holford (1992) in the February 1992 issue of JOPERD. Let it suffice to say here that Holford reminds coaches and administrators that we live in a political, racial, religious and culturally diverse country and the following three pronged analysis should be considered before instituting prayer: 1) the statute or program must have a secular purpose; 2)the primary effect of the program or statute must be one that neither advances or inhibits religion; and 3) the program or statute must not promote excessive entanglement of government with religion. To be constitutional the program must pass all three tests. Cases cited in the Holford article illustrate that different judges have given different interpretations.

John Seigenthaler, chairman of the Freedom Forum's First Amendment Center and chairman emeritus of the Nashville Tennessean newspaper, has expressed concerns about first amendment violations which were evident to him in the recent political campaign. Seigenthaler (1992) had this to say:

> As I listen to the echoes of the rhetoric, I'm reminded of why a few hundred years ago visionaries like Thomas Jerfferson and James Madison drew the sharp line of the First Amendment that separates the government from religion and from the control of speech and other rights. In this year of politics, the tone and tenor of some of what was said was so moralistic as to be manic, so puritanical as to be punitive. (p. 1)

Seigenthaler went on to explain that statements made by Pat Robertson and Pat Buchanan implied that God was on their side and thus was against the opposition. I get that same feeling when I observe the religious posturing of some athletes and coaches. This concerns me.

And this concern brings me to the final reason why I believe sport and religion should be disentangled. That final reason is what Frank Deford (1976) has labeled as sportianity or Jocks for Jesus movement. This movement had its origins in 1954 when the Fellowship for Christian Athletes was formed. Since that time many such organizations have been founded to provide a variety of religious programs and to recruit new members to religion. The most well-known of these, in addition to the FCA, are Sports Ambassadors, Athletes in Action (AIA), Pro Athletes Outreach (PAO), Sports World Ministries, and Baseball Chapel (Eitzen and Sage,

1993).

The reason I am dienchanted with these organizations is their stand on social issues and their conservative theology. In the latest revision of their sociology of sport text, Eitzen and Sage (1993) have this to say:

> There is lttle inclination on the part of religious leaders and the various organizations that make up Sportianity to confront the pressing social issues of sport or of the larger society. . . In reviewing the numerous publications circulated by the organizations involved in Sportianity, one thing stands out rather glaringly, namely that little direct effort is being channeled into improving the morality of sports. There is no noticeable social reform movement on the part of sportianity leaders. The various organizations and their members have not spoken out against racism, sexism, violence, the evils of collegiate athletic recruiting, or any of the other well-known unethical practices, excesses, and abuses in the world of sport with the exception of exhortations about refraining from drugs. Instead the pervasive theme is stick with positive, don't deal with the problems in athletics. . . Just publicize the good story about the good ole boy who does good things.
>
> In the final analysis, then, sports morality does not appear to have been improved by the Sportianity movement. Instead, Sportianity seems willing to accept sport as is, and seems more devoted to maintaining the status quo than to dealing with sports as a social practice with many of the same problems of the larger society that need attention and resolution. (p. 196)

Another indication of the FCA conservatism was revealed by Pat Griffin (1992) in a recent article in Quest. According to Griffin, The FCA distributes a booklet at national coaches conferences entitled "Emotional Dependency: A Threat to Close Friendships". This booklet, from Griffin's perspective, portrays all of the lesbian stereotypes and suggests the path out of this "sinful" relationship is through prayer and discipline. From my perspective,

promoting this kind of literature, smacks of the same kind of ignorance and exclusion which was evident in the Pat Buchanan speech at the Republican Convention which was referred to earlier in this discussion. From my value system this does not appear to be Christian, so perhaps that word should be stricken from FCA and tne organization should just be called the Fellowship of Athletes.

Let me summarize, then, my reasons for believing that sport and religion are an unholy alliance.

1. The essences of religion is the golden rule--selflessness. The essence of sport is selfishness. Competitive situations promote meism. Religion promotes otherism.

2. My second reason can be explained by the idea expressed by many people who feel as I do about the incompatiblity of sport and religion and that idea is that treating God as some kind of supercoach demeans both religion and sport. That was one of the things I was trying to say when I discussed my concern about the immature faith of athletes.

The eminent theologian Paul Tillich (1969) says it best. "Authentic religion is not something that cannot be added as decoration merely to embellish human existence. . . It is part and parcel of a struggle." (p.12).

3. Which leads me to the third reason--as explained earlier, it seems to me that many athletes are practicing magic rather than religion, and if you remember my concern about this led me to state that the prayer of most athletes, was more magical than spiritual. The number of studies done on superstition in sport also offers support for the idea that athletes often confuse magic for religion (Dunleavy and Miracle, 1979; Becker, 1975; Griffith, 1981; Watson and Tharpe, 1990; Neil et al, 1981; Womack, 1979).

4. My fourth reason for separating sport and religion is an important one. That is the First Amendment argument which guarantees religious freedom. It seems to me that prayer and witnessing in sport violate this principle. I don't believe athletes have the freedom not to pray. Of course, they may choose not to witness. But not to pray on a praying team would make one a non-conformist, and we all know what happens to nonconformists, especially nonconforming athletes. I guess the reason I got into this topic was because of the praying athlete. I found myself becoming more and more offended by the kneeling, praying athlete as well as the witnessing of Christian athletes in the post-game interview. From a personal standpoint, watching athletes pray makes me feel as though I am invading their privacy because prayer to me is so personal. My praying is done in private, and in church. Actually my praying is done mostly at funerals.

One of my points here is the same point that Mimi Murray, AAHPERD

president, was writing about in her President's message in the February, 1993 issue of Update. As Murray puts it:

> Understanding the "otherness" of others is essential because of rapidly changing demographic developments. . . In 1980, one in five U. S. citizens had a minority background; by 1990 this figure changed to one in four, and the trend is expected to continue. (p. 2).

Murray goes on to explain that cultural democracy implies that certain principles be implemented. Each person, regardless of race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, or religion has access to educational opportunities, free speech and cultural traditions. Also implicit is that each of us learn new ways of listening to each other.

5. My fifth and final argument for separating religion and sport is what I consider to be the hypocrisy of the religious organizations for athletes. My bias here, as you know by now, is that they represent to me the religious right and that scares me. The religion of hate is an oxymoron --a combination of contradictory or incongruous words. Again the views of the respected theolgian, Tillich (1960), have relevance here. He believes that religion is ultimate and cannot endanger a free society, but religious forces such as religious conservatism, religious authoritarianism, and religious intolerance are definite threats to our freedom.

To conclude let me quote another feminist, Denise Lardner Carmody (in Hoffman, 1993).

> This is the ecstasy I find redeeming big-time spectator sports: now and then one can see humanity fully alive (Irenaeus's definition of God's glory). I don't think that the occasional glimpse we get justifies what the coaches and the networks subject us to. I don't think the rare time of perfection blocks out the regular babble and trivia and violence and manipulation. But I do think we should applaud grace wherever we find it. And I do think the men and women to whom God has given superb physical talents or athletic skills should be encouraged and applauded. It pains me that musicians and poets equally gifted whould be so much less appreciated. I think the financial side of big-time spectator sports is a triumph of Satan. Yet despite that, now and then I find myself in front of the tube cheering, and I think I hear God joining in. (p. 109)

My only comment to that is AMEN and HALLELUJAH!

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